

Claims

1. A surgical instrument, comprising:
 - a handle portion operably configured to produce an articulation motion and a firing motion;
 - 5 a shaft having a longitudinal axis attached to the handle portion for transferring the articulation motion and the firing motion;
 - an articulation mechanism coupling the shaft to the end effector and responsive to the articulation motion to rotate the end effector from the longitudinal axis of the shaft;
 - an end effector distally attached to the articulation mechanism;
 - 10 a firing mechanism responsive to the firing motion and coupled for movement through the articulation mechanism and end effector in response to the firing motion;
 - a pair of support plates flanking the firing mechanism across the articulation mechanism; and
 - 15 a retaining member inserted between and laterally spacing the pair of support plates proximal to the firing mechanism for spacing the pair of support plates at least a thickness of the firing mechanism therebetween.
2. The surgical instrument of claim 1, wherein the retaining member comprises a plurality of laterally stacked retaining bars.

3. A surgical instrument comprising:
- a handle portion operable to produce a firing motion, a closing motion, and an articulation motion;
- 5 a shaft coupled to the handle portion operable to separately transfer the firing motion, the closing motion, and the articulation motion;
- an elongate channel coupled to the shaft;
- an anvil pivotally coupled to the elongate channel, responsive to the closing motion from the shaft;
- 10 a firing device including a distally presented cutting edge longitudinally received between the elongate channel and the anvil;
- an articulation mechanism pivoting the elongate channel from the shaft in response to the articulation motion; and
- a pair of support plates flanking the firing mechanism across the articulation mechanism; and
- 15 a retaining member inserted between and laterally spacing the pair of support plates proximal to the firing mechanism.
4. The surgical instrument of claim 3, wherein the retaining member comprises a plurality of laterally stacked retaining bars.